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United States of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 97th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 128 WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28, 1982 No. 48

Senate

Mr. TSONGAS. Mr. President, I rise today to submit a resolution calling upon the President to encourage the Government of Indonesia to change its policies on the island of East Timor. On several occasions I have spoken of the tragic situation in the former Portugese colony of East Timor, which was invaded by Indonesia 6 years ago. On December 16 of last year I expressed great concern over accounts from Roman Catholic sources in East Timor who reported that a recent Indonesian military offenseive, accompanied by charges of the most gruesome of atrocities, could lead to serious food shortages. I emphasized that East Timor was still recovering from the Cambodia-like cataclysm that struck the island territory from 1978 through 1980, and suggested that additional food stockpiles be established to help avert further disasters.

On February 8, I drew attention to Australian press accounts of an appeal for food aid made by Martinho da Costa Lopes, the Apostolic Administrator of East Timor, to the Australian Catholic Relief Agency. I noted that the Austrailian Government had responded immediately with a pledge of 1,000 tons of corn for the Austrailian Catholic Relief shipment. I was careful to note that Austrailian Catholic Relief had not been permitted to enter East Timor to supervise distribution of the food aid, and called for the establishment of full-time, on-the-ground operations by qualified, independent international relief agencies. I stated my belief that a neutral international presence is needed in East Timor to protect the civilian population from further violence as well as to distribute food and medicine.

On another issue, I was very pleased to learn that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was allowed to visit East Timor prisons over a 2-week period in late February, and hope that ICRC is able to continue its valuable activities in the territory.

The ICRC prison visits were undoubtedly a positive step, but they constitute only one aspect of the situation. I have learned, for example, that the Indonesian Government flatly refused to accept the 1,000 tons of corn offered by Australia to fortify the Timor stockpiles. The reason for this stand, according to a March 8 article from the Sydney Morning Herald, is "Jakarta's continuing anger over the credence given by Australian Catholic Relief to Monsignor da Costa Lopes's letter" which the Indonesian Government "claims was mischievous and false."

But Monsignor Lopes apparently had good reason to worry about the food situation, not to mention the human rights situation in general. The Far Eastern Economic Review reported on March 19 that "some observers are concerned that food shortages may develop and that Indonesia's angry reaction to international criticism of its East Timor policy may hinder relief activities," and added that relief agencies want some form of relief work to continue in East Timor but that "Jakarta has been reluctant to admit there is such a need."

The Indonesian Government is also most reluctant to admit that many thousands of East Timorese want to leave their homeland because of the existing situation on the island. There are hundreds of people who have been approved for immigration to Australia or Portugal but have been prevented from doing so.

The London Times, in a February 24 editorial, notes recent reports of atrocities committed by Indonesian forces against the East Timorese, and states that, "If this was the situation after six years it is no longer tenable to argue that the Indonesian fait accompli has to be accepted in the interests of peace and stability."

I wholeheartedly agree with this statement, and believe that a just political solution in accordance with international law is the only viable solution to this tragedy. And I believe that it is in Indonesia's long-term interests to agree to such a just solution.

Mr. President, I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution. The future of the Timorese people may depend on our action.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the editorial, "Horror in East Timor," from the London Times, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the editorial was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the London Times, Feb. 24, 1982]

HORROR IN EAST TIMOR

When Indonesian troops invaded East Timor in December 1975 it was quite obvious that no one was going to stop them. Fretilin (the Revolutionary Front for the Independence of East Timor), which at that moment was in de facto control of the country, was certainly not strong enough. Portugal, the colonial power which had not—and still has not—formally renounced sovereignty, no longer had any authority on the ground or any troops capable of taking action anywhere near.

The nearest neighbouring country, Australia, had publicly all but promised Indonesia a free hand. Western powers generally, in common with the members of the Association of South-East Asian states, were anxious to keep on good terms with Indonesia as a major oil-producer, a rapidly expanding market, and a regional power opposed to communism.

Not much has been heard about East Timor in this country since then, but the crime has continued to trouble consciences both in Portugal and in Australia. President Suharto officially proclaimed the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia in 1976, and this was recognized by Australia in 1978, as well as by the ASEAN states. But Portugal continues to claim sovereignty on the grounds that the East Timorese have not yet been able to exercise their right of self-determination, and the United Nations has consistently called for the withdrawal of Indonesian forces.

More important, it seems that all is far from well in East Timor itself. A pamphlet published yesterday by the Catholic Institute for International Relations states that Indonesian control is "still not unchallenged". It is "clear that resistance continues, and in 1981-1982 the Indonesian army was carrying out large-scale sweeps in the Lautem region, in the east of the territory". It is estimated, horrifyingly, that since the invasion more than 100,000 people have died, either directly as a result of military operations or from consequent famine and disease, out of a population of only about 670,000.

Two documents seem particularly damning for the Indonesian authorities. One is a report sent to President Suharto in June last year by the "Regional People's Representative Assembly" appointed by the Indonesians themselves. This report, while expressing undying gratitude for the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia, suggests that that objective is being jeopardized by the behaviour of Indonesian troops and officials which "can only be described as being the behaviour of conquerors towards a conquered people". It cites instances of murder, torture, and other forms of violence and abuse.

The other document is a letter from the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in East Timor to the Chairman of Australian Catholic Relief, sent last November, which refers to expected famine and to the killing of many Timorese people, including children and pregnant women, by Indonesian forces in the military operation of July, August and September 1981.

If this was the situation after six years it is no longer tenable to argue that the Indonesian fait accompli has to be accepted in the interests of peace and stability. Indonesia has obviously not won over the hearts and minds of the East Timorese, and her very unwillingness to allow independent observers access to the territory corroborates that. A solution based on negotiations and the free choice of the inhabitants is urgently needed and the international community—particularly those countries which have close economic and military ties with Indonesia, including Britain—should make a much more serious effort to achieve one.